



**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 8**

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Ref: EPR-N

14 October 2008

ATTN: Ms. Sheryl Parker
HQ ACC/A7PP
129 Andrews Street, Suite 122
Langley AFB, VA 23665-2769

Dear Sheryl Parker:

Re: Proposed White Elk Military Operations Area
DEIS [CEQ# 20080313]

In accordance with our responsibilities and authorities under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act, the Region 8 office of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed and is providing a CEQ rating for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the proposed White Elk Military Operations Area (MOA).

The purpose for the DEIS is to analyze the environmental effects of designating additional airspace in northeastern Nevada adjacent to Hill AFB, Utah, that would provide military pilot training opportunities that cannot be accomplished in the existing Utah Test and Training Range (UTTR). The MOA would underlie the existing Currie and Tippet Air Traffic Control Assigned Airspace managed by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), a cooperating agency during this NEPA process. The FAA and the USAF could identify no reasonable alternatives to the proposed alternative despite early attempts to define new airspace for this purpose and need. We defer to the FAA, which has jurisdiction by law or special expertise for administering all navigable airspace in the public interest of safety.

The DEIS documents the process that analyzed impacts identified during the scoping hearings. We reviewed a transcript of these hearings and were satisfied with the public involvement process required by NEPA. Environmental impacts were assessed and mitigation measures were designed to address the following relevant planning issues organized into nine relevant resource categories:

- Regional energy development projects
- Civil/commercial aircraft flight operation compatibility
- Access to local general aviation airports
- World-class glider aircraft flight opportunities for public recreation
- Ground effects of sonic booms from military aircraft

In general, the DEIS is well organized and thorough in its analysis of impacts. It also clearly demonstrates that impacts from the proposed alternative will not be significant. EPA evaluates the potential effects of a proposed action and the adequacy of information in the Draft EIS. EPA rates this proposal to establish the White Elk MOA with a Lack of Objection (“LO”) under our rating criteria. The “LO” rating means that our review has resulted in finding no environmental impacts that have not been effectively mitigated in the proposed alternative. We are raising no objections to the proposed action.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments at this stage of the project. If you have any questions or would like to discuss our rating, please contact me (303 312-6004) or James Hanley (303) 312-6725 of my staff.

Sincerely,

/s/

Larry Svoboda
Director, NEPA Program
Office of Ecosystems Protection
and Remediation

